



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Arrest of Opposition Demonstrators in Russia**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 8, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As many of you know, on March 3<sup>rd</sup> several thousand democracy activists participated in the so-called "march of those who disagree" in St. Petersburg to peacefully protest the politics of the Russian government.

These demonstrators did not have a permit. They didn't have a permit because the local authorities refused to approve a protest route which would allow the assembly to gather and march in the city center. Police blocked the protestors, beating some with clubs and arresting over 100 people. This situation raises serious questions about the Russian authorities' commitment to the freedom of assembly and expression, protections that are essential to a democratic society.

We urge the Russian government to respect the freedom of the press, speech, and assembly and to adhere fully to international standards for the protection of human rights and commitments of democratic countries.

March regional elections and December parliamentary elections in Russia this year provide important opportunities for Russia to clearly demonstrate its commitment to these key principles.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.